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SUBJECT: COPENHAGEN CLIMATE SUMMIT: VATICAN CHARITIES PLAN BIG
EFFORT

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Summary

¶1. Summary: (SBU) Caritas Internationalis, the international federation of national Caritas groups (Catholic Church-affiliated aid organizations), will send a large delegation to Copenhagen to press for strong action on climate change. Caritas will also promote its "Grow Climate Justice" campaign that brings together more than 170 Catholic organizations worldwide. While disappointed about USG pessimism regarding odds for a binding agreement, Caritas is optimistic about prospects for other tangible results, particularly financial and technical support for less developed countries. Caritas involvement should translate into the mobilization of one of the world's most extensive charity networks in support of follow-up to Copenhagen. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) During a November 24 meeting with P/EOff, Caritas Director of Communications Patrick Nicholson said Caritas was taking the Copenhagen Summit very seriously. Lesley-Anne Knight, Caritas' Secretary General (based in Rome), will lead Caritas' 40-plus member delegation. During the summit, Caritas will stress with participants the "Grow Climate Justice" campaign. The campaign has three objectives: (1) to convince countries to recognize and protect all peoples' right to sustainable development, prioritizing the most vulnerable, (2) to persuade industrialized countries to provide developing countries sufficient, accessible, financial and technological support for adaptation and mitigation, and (3) to lobby industrialized countries to commit to at least 30-40 percent reduction in emissions by 2020 (based on 1990 levels).

¶3. (SBU) The Holy See will send its own delegation to Copenhagen. Depending on the participation of other world leaders, Secretary of State (Prime Minister-equivalent) Tarcisio Bertone may lead the Vatican group. Also on the Vatican's delegation will be Cardinal Keith O'Brien, the head of the Scottish Conference of Catholic Bishops, who has led Vatican delegations to previous international environmental meetings. O'Brien recently stated that "Wealthy countries have an unequivocal moral duty to reduce their own emissions and help developing countries who are already suffering the consequences of our profligate use of fossil fuels for economic gain."

¶4. (SBU) Nicholson said Caritas would consider Copenhagen a success if developing economies are involved in the decision making process, and if participants reach agreements that bring

about tangible results. He said most within Catholic charity circles understand the U.S. position going into the Summit, though some are disappointed that the USG believes a binding international agreement on emissions is unlikely. At the same time, Caritas appreciates U.S. transparency on this issue, which reduces the possibility of a "successful" agreement failing later if parties do not live up to their commitments.

Comment

15. (SBU) Together with the Pope (reftel), Caritas is working to educate and mobilize global leaders and societies about climate change. Caritas believes the effects of climate change magnify many of the problems facing the world's poor (i.e., droughts, famine, internally displaced people, war, etc.). Caritas appreciates U.S. efforts to advance the agenda while stressing that the summit must be quickly followed by further, concrete actions. End Comment.

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